

did we find first our hearts (or how they ache) by TolkienGirl

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Summary: You figure that, after all that happened, everyone is entitled to their own ghosts. Yours is Nancy. (Steve, post-Season 2)

did we find first our hearts (or how they ache)

You figure that, after all that happened, everyone is entitled to their own ghosts.

Yours is Nancy.

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School is shit. This is not a surprise. You've always hated school; cramped in those torture-device desks, listening to teachers drone on about integers and revolutions.

The worst part is, some of it sticks. Things like the definition of osmosis, things like the way a ray is a line with a definite starting point, stretching to infinity.

Things like that stupid line from Shakespeare—*that looks on tempests, and is never shaken*—you think about line, and what the hell it might mean—

And what the hell does it *take*?

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Your grandfather—Mom's side, Dad doesn't talk to his family—died when you were thirteen. And you were still a weedy kid, still afraid of the dark even though you didn't know what was in it, then.

You cried at his funeral. Your dad told you not to embarrass him.

Yeah, you remember that.

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Some kids, from dead-end towns like this—some kids think that they're going to go somewhere with sports or SAT scores or something. You have no such...what's the word. A Nancy-word. *Pretensions*. You have no such pretensions.

You are Steve Harrington, basketball star of Hawkins High only

because no one better has shown up. You're the rich kid, and you have the kind of friends who don't ask *why* your parents are always gone, only *when*.

We both won.

Nancy came to that game. Didn't she remember it? You, in all your glory—why *wasn't* that allowed to feel the same as winning a war? You once fought off a monster with a bat, and all you wanted to do was piss yourself. It didn't feel like a victory.

We both won. If you feel it, it makes it true for a little while. But you don't know how to write it down like that.

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You're an idiot, Steve Harrington.

You get up in the middle of the night, wash your face. Stare at the mirror. Try to remember what Nancy's lips tasted like. Hate yourself for being the kind of person who forgets.

Your mom is home. She wakes up. You pass each other in the hall.

She stares at you like she doesn't know you. Maybe it's the bruises on your face. Maybe she's still half-asleep.

Maybe at night, people don't hide what is inside them.

"Steve?" she whispers.

"Sorry," you say. You're so used to saying sorry.

You hit your bed hard again, stare at the ceiling, and wish dreaming about your ghost was easy as missing her.

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The starting point was history class. She did that low slow blink, Bambi eyes. Pointed chin. And you thought, *yeah, let's go with this.*

That kid, the kid who didn't think twice about abandoning the

frumpy friend pool-side to get onto...*better things*...

That kid is dead, and good riddance to him.

(You still have to walk around inside his corpse.)

It stretches to infinity, and memory is a shifty thing, so sometimes you can only feel her hands and sometimes you can only hear her voice and sometimes you can remember her loving you, but none of it fits together into anything that stays.

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You break three pencils trying to rewrite the damn essay. Nancy definitely thought it was shit, and you do too. What college is going to take you?

She won't want you around for her senior year. The thought of working for Dad—

But what college is going to take you?

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Tempests. Is it a tempest if only a dozen people know about it?

It's cruel, that that's a bond you share with Nancy, or *could* share, but you missed the mark somehow. You know what happened to Barbara, and you know so much more than that—

Most of the time you have to know it alone. You are not the casualty of this. You are not a survivor, though you did survive.

You were there. You are here.

You are all entitled to your ghosts—the kids and the girl they call Eleven, Mrs. Byers and the Chief, and yes, the girl you loved.

You are all entitled to your ghosts.

Yours is Nancy.